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News

Demonstrators Call for Continued Funding of Adult Education

By Edwin Folven, 2/09/2012

LAUSD Board to Consider Budget Cuts on Feb. 14



Hundreds of protesters rallied outside LAUSD headquarters Thursday. (photo by Edwin Folven)

Loud chants of “Save Our Schools, Save Our Schools” could be heard for blocks around Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) headquarters downtown on Thursday as hundreds of demonstrators called for funding to be maintained for adult education programs.

The demonstrators gathered ahead of the LAUSD Board meeting on Feb. 14, where district officials are scheduled to consider a budget proposal that eliminates funding for the district’s 30 adult and vocational schools, including Westside Adult School, which is headquartered at Fairfax High School. For many members of the crowd, adult schools are the only means of learning English or new job skills, or finishing their high school diploma.

“I am here to save our schools, because if they close the schools, I won’t have any opportunity to learn,” said Marcelo Anderson, 71, who is enrolled in English courses at the Mid City Adult School. “They already cut ten hours a week from our classes, which used to be twenty hours a week. I’ve been taking classes for one year, and it has really helped me.”

Matthew Kogan, chair of the Adult Education Committee for United Teachers Los Angeles, which helped organize the rally, said eliminating funding for the schools would be devastating for the local economy.



Many demonstrators said adult education programs are their only option to learn. (photo by Edwin Folven)

“Adult education helps people get better jobs, stronger paychecks, and finish their education,” Kogan said. “There will be a tremendous community impact. The Board needs to know that they will be hurting a lot of people if they cut adult education.”

Westside Adult School principal Jim Chacon, who did not attend the rally because he is a district administrator, sympathized with the demonstrators and said the cuts being proposed would likely force his school to close. He added, however, that he is optimistic the Board will delay a vote on the cuts and will look for other ways to fund adult education.

“The pattern has been that budget development and negotiation goes on through May, so if they vote to cut adult education, the fight will continue,” Chacon said. “Our hope is that they do not eliminate the funding, and that they find a way to fund us. We are more than willing to take a cut, because we are understanding of the budget situation, but we are asking them not to eliminate us.”

Chacon said Westside Adult School serves approximately 6,000 students a year, and has an annual budget of approximately \$6 million. Chacon added that if funding were eliminated, approximately 60 teachers, four administrators and 30 support staff at the school would lose their jobs.

Approximately 350,000 students are enrolled in adult education programs citywide. The annual budget for the district’s Division of Adult and Career Education is approximately \$190 million.

Susan Cox, a spokesperson for the LAUSD, said the board would be considering alternatives to cutting all funding for adult education, but that the district is facing a \$540 million budget deficit for the 2012/13 school year. Cox also said the budget deliberations are likely to continue after the Feb. 14 meeting.

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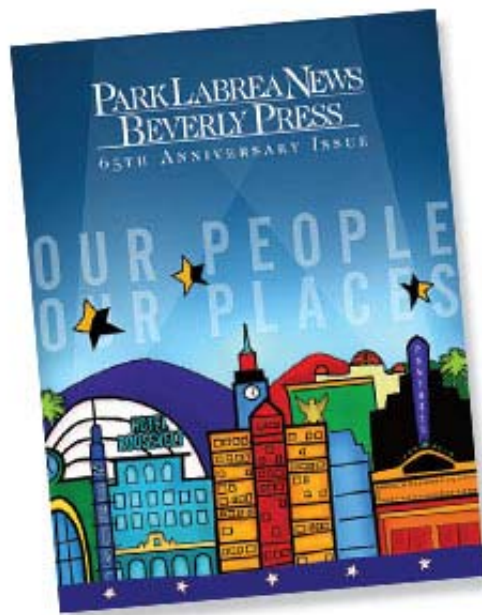
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